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ABSTRACT

This study used data from a national survey of homosexual and bisexual public school teachers to explore differences among participants in rural, suburban, and urban schools. A survey was sent to 1,350 participants through national, state, and urban based gay teacher organizations. Of those sampled, 904 responded. Findings included the following: (1) 15 percent of the sample population described themselves as teaching in rural school districts, and nearly 60 percent of these rural teachers were lesbians; (2) both rural and urban teachers demonstrated similar concerns and dissatisfaction regarding pay, isolation, and other work factors; (3) rural teachers were significantly more satisfied with working conditions than either urban or suburban teachers; (4) gay suburban and rural teachers were significantly more stressed and less open than urban teachers about their sexual orientation; (5) rural teachers indicated a higher rate of depersonalization from their students, a higher level of emotional exhaustion, and a lowered sense of personal accomplishment from teaching than either urban or suburban teachers; (6) rural and suburban teachers were significantly less open, more fearful of exposure, less accepting of their identities, and different in their overall sense of identity than urban teachers; and (7) rural teachers have experienced the highest rate of deaths related to acquired immune deficiency syndrome. (JB)

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Community and Conformity: A National Survey Contrasting Rural, Suburban, and Urban Lesbian, Gay Male, and Bisexual Public School Teachers

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Consultant, Invited Speaker

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REMARKS

I have come to talk about Community and Conformity. That is, pressure on teachers and administrators to avoid controversy by conforming to or not confronting local values. However before beginning, I have to apologize to you and particularly to your program chair and leadership, who I accused of being biased or even bigoted in our initial exchange of communications. I have found this charge to be untrue. Please accept my apology for a rush to judgment. I have experienced openness and compassion for social issues from them. You are fortunate to have such concerned leaders for your SIG. Tonight is an opportunity to exchange views, and it is an opportunity to encourage joint ventures between SIGs, where two primary variables act as a links between the groups.

> I believe gay teachers should be out, but I am afraid to tell I am gay. I do nothing to hide my gay life. I have brought my lover to school functions. If anyone ever asked I would tell them I am gay. No one ever asked. I live in a small town and teach in a small rural school. My lover lives in a nearby city.[1]

> Being gay and teaching on my part was very difficult. The students knew, but the teachers I worked with supported me because I was a DCTA member and got along with them. But being gay and teaching was not enjoyable for me. I was picked on by many students and I overlooked many of the name calling as fag, queer, etc. I was out to make it to retirement but was forced out of teaching after 23 years. You can be gay and find a better job for most individuals.[2]

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[1]46 years old, male, elementary classroom teacher, rural New York, 20 years experience, 18 years in same building, not open.

[2]52 years old, male, middle/junior H.S., social studies teacher, Colorado, neutral on openness, survey done during referendum year.

This evening I want to talk about rural teachers by contrasting them with suburban and urban teachers, using self-identified lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers. In a broader sense, I want to talk about the lives of non-conforming teachers: the effects of taboo subjects, hidden feelings, and the avoidance of conflict on teachers in our schools. Tonight is about people.

> I work in a relatively conservative rural school. Today is our gay pride march and even though the people from that town are unlikely to be near the march, I am scared. [3]

Conformity to community standards can be complex, subtle, and/or brutally plain. Community standards are a set of human behaviors and/or values to which people are expected to adhere or avow. However, in a democracy, conformity and individuality constantly duel within our society, and conformity to community standards are generally a locally-based creation. It should not be seen in conservative verse liberal terms. It is possible that a community or group can hold liberal views on an issue, while the non-conformist holds what may be conservative views.

> I have presently had my contract non-renewed due to speaking up on school safety issues and reporting our district for non-compliance with state and federally mandated ESL laws. My male supervisor detests strong assertive (female symbol).
> I am fearful that during the law suit - my former district will try to expose my sexuality - which will also expose 4-5

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[3] 44 years old, female, elementary librarian, rural Massachusetts, 11 years teaching, 1 year in present school, not out a rights protected state.

> other gay teachers in that small school district - stay turned!! Thanks for doing the survey![4]

Traditionally, communities have felt more inclined to regulate the moral conduct of teachers to a greater extent than other professions. This may be due in part to the fact that teaching arose from the religious leaders role to inform and carry traditions to the next generation. We have all seen the old teacher contracts where marriage, smoking, drinking, or foul language were grounds for dismissal. In any case, teachers are held to a higher standard of personal conduct than community members or other professionals. This maybe due to their contact with or perceived influence on children. The local board or the community leader was and still is the final authority. They have had the unchallenged right to extend these prohibitions to taboo ideas and unspecified behaviors.

> It was difficult to answer some of these questions adequately. I think that my having been married and having taught in this community for so many years has made me somewhat of an anomaly. While I don't hide the fact that I live with a women, I feel as thought most people in the community where I teach put the actual realization that I am a lesbian somewhere out of their consciousness - like they probably really <u>do</u> know, but don't acknowledge it. And since I'm not overt about anything and work hard at maintaining positive, caring relationships with students, both they and their parents leave my status "unspoken of" - Some day, I feel there will be a problem with some student or parents with whom I <u>don't</u> have a good relationship, for

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[4] 42 years old, female, elementary school counselor, 20 years experience, 2 years in the same school, not open, Colorado, survey done during the referendum year.

> whatever reasons. I feel vulnerable, but also feel that I've had good, positive relationships thus far.[5]

It is necessary to note that many of the issues related to conformity are not legal. Conformity to community values arise from local traditions which are defined by a culture as "acceptable and normal", or those that are "not acceptable." Various people or classes within a society may have different cultural expectations for their behaviors; however, the network of behavioral standards form a cultural sense of propriety that people are expected to follow. In many cases, teachers are perceived as needing to hold a higher sense of propriety than the communities they serve. However, for the majority of gay teachers legal issues are still a concern.

> As a pre-services teacher I'm very conscious as I interview for internships and potential employers of my lesbianism. I feel I have had to examine behaviors like dress, hair, etc. to appear more assimilated with the straight culture.[6]

Depending on the society, failure to conform carries sanctions. The consequences of non-conformity to community standards in rural America are explored for lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers. Some would consider this an extreme group to examine the effects of community and conformity on job satisfaction, job stress, and identity. Rather than think in

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[5]40 years old, female, Jr.-Sr. H.S. English teacher, rural Massachusetts, 19 years experience, 11 years in same school, not open, a protected state.

[6]30 years old, female, pre-service elementary classroom teacher, Massachusetts, open, a protected state.

terms of extremes, I would rather think in terms of a prevailing view. It is safe to say that being gay in most of rural America, or for that matter in most communities, would not conform to community values or norms, and being a gay teacher would equally qualify as non-conforming. The important point is that the more homogeneous the community, the more likely any number of social characteristics could be considered non-conformist. Being Black, Jewish, foreign born, or a strong female could all be grounds for non-conformist, as could holding divergent social or political views.

> I am an assistant principal. This made it difficult to answer many of your questions on teaching. I make $$ a year, but I believe teachers should make more.
> I was just denied a promotion to principal twice in two years, even though my evaluations are all excellent and I am a Harvard graduate. I think it may be because I am gay.[7]

Before continuing, it is necessary to make it clear that this brief talk is not intended to be a bashing session on rural America or the rural gestalt. It is simply that in rural America it is more difficult to separate or hide one's personal values or behaviors from what may be a narrower sense of expected values or behaviors. Rural communities are smaller; and in many cases, the communities were formed by small groups with common beliefs or origins. It is equally important to mention that "hiding" non-conformist behavior or views has consequences. When people bemoan the breakdown of the family and family values, they are

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[7]36 years old, female, administrator, rural Michigan, 7 years experience, 3 years in same school, not open.

repeating old American themes which parallel the shift from rural to urban life, the influx of "foreign values" in the form of immigrants, and the challenge of the Constitution to provide equality to all before the law. Teachers are placed between the forces of tradition and change. In rural America, individuals stand more clearly separated from each other, more open to community inspection or observation.

> There is a tremendous amount of guilt when good, caring teachers like myself choose to stay closeted with their students about the truth of our lives. Even though we intellectualize about the safety and reality of remaining silent with students, we look directly into our gay, lesbian and bi student's eyes and in their faces, and pretend we don't exist. That's the crazy-making, ego destructing behavior that makes my life less sane. I am currently making provisions to leave teaching all together. There is much more value in living a whole life than compartmentalizing yourself so that you don't offend heterosexual sensibilities.
>
> Best wishes on your project. These surveys hearten me.[8]

You may on occasion hear anger in my voice tonight. It is extremely difficult for me and many other gay people not to be angry; anger is the emotion of minorities. Anger over a Congress who does not sanction its majority leader when he clearly and intentional makes a slip of the tone saying, "Barney FAG," delays and then excuses himself saying "Frank"; or, when Newt Gingrich retaliates against his lesbian sister's favorable comments about him, by saying that he doesn't think homosexuals should be teachers.

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[8]29 years old, female, intermediate school special education teacher, rural Michigan, 8 years experience, 2 years in the same school, not open.

> Our recent union contract negotiations resulted in a new term "spouse-designee" indicating "an adult living in the home of the teacher in the role of spouse." Throughout the negotiations process my committee were <u>all</u> encouraging and willing to support this change. It felt great![9]

Can you imagine for one moment him saying, "I don't think Jews should be teachers," or "I don't think any African American should be teaching white children," or "I don't think women should be school administrators." Where was the outcry, the denunciation, where were the teachers unions? For that matter where was the AERA!

> I would love to be more visible as I think it is important to have gay role models. I am however realistic enough to realize I cannot shout my sexual orientation from the roof tops in a small town. I am out to all of my immediate family, good friends and colleagues whom I consider close friends which would comprise about 10 of my co-workers.
> I don't really care who else may know it or assume it but I don't feel a need to disclose to them. A fellow teacher says I may be overly sensitive but I choose to speak out when it sounds like stereotyping or put downs.[10]

What about the recent incident that arose from a talk show where a man was killed because he professed an infatuation with a straight man? Many jumped to the killer's defense saying his manhood was threatened. I find this highly ironic in a society gone mad over the death penalty. The entire country lined up to excuse the killing. Try dismissing a women who is killed by an

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[9]54 years old, female, K-12 health, rural New York, 18 years experience in public schools, 18 years in the same school, 8 years in college, open.

[10]48 years old, male, middle school art teacher, rural Wisconsin, 25 years experience, 20 years in the same school, neutral on openness, a rights protected state.

estranged husband or boyfriend by saying she deserved it because she offended his manhood. Where was the societal rage. There was none.

> I think sexual orientation should <u>not</u> be a secret at work; and yet, even in a state where the law does not allow discrimination based upon sexual orientation, I do not feel entirely safe. That's sad. School committees and uneducated (on this issue) parents create an atmosphere of fear for teachers. Unfortunately, the Salem witch hunt days continue to haunt us.
>
> I look forward to the day when I'm out to my students and <u>all</u> of the staff, not just the handful I've chosen. I do think it's of interest that all of the people I'm out to are male, and I'm a lesbian! (happy face) My immediate supervisor is a gem, reporting to me that he was happy for me, because now (he) knows there is someone there for me when I go home.
>
> I don't think there are any other "out" gay teachers at work. One woman who I believe was gay claimed not to be (within earshot of me) in the course of a conversation regarding roommates. Another teacher, a man, is presently married. So, who knows?
>
> Thanks for taking the time to create this study and please be sure to give the results to LTN! (Lesbian Teachers Network)[11]

Anger is a part of me, as it may be among many people who do not receive justice. I am an American, and I want to be treated with the same dignity, respect, and rights you have come to expect. I am a teacher, a good teacher, who wants to give to children, as you do.

> It does tend to isolate me from my co-workers. Earlier, because I couldn't talk about my "family." Now, because I am still a little awkward and shy about it. Being out doesn't change a lifetime habit of reticence about my personal life.

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[11]30 years old, female, middle school English/literature teacher, rural Massachusetts, 6 years experience, 6 years in the same school, neutral on openness.

> Biggest problem is lack of insurance for my partner. Sometimes I fear for her and that isn't fair. I should be able to insure her.[12]

It may be something of a surprise to some of you, but it is illegal to be gay and a teacher in many states. In Oklahoma, it is illegal to even vaguely discuss homosexuality. Only eight states provide civil rights protection based on sexual orientation: Hawaii, California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Vermont. So tonight if you see or feel such an anger, it is real, but not directed at you.

> Although state law protects me, my role as a physical educator (and lock room duties) would be affected should my orientation become an issue - my ability to do my job would be compromised so that my job assignment would probably be changed - (elementary assignment?)
> Life is tough enough without the additional difficulties of this life style - although I am learning to appreciate myself, I would not wish the longer "row to hoe" for anyone.
> This is a large, but parochial community that is certain the earth is <u>flat</u>. To deal with gays/lesbians in their midst, much less in their schools, is way beyond their present capabilities -
> It's time for me to move![13]

In fifteen minutes, it would be difficult to detail the results of my work. The study provided an opportunity to examine the effects of nonconformity to community standards. There are no studies of lesbian, gay male, or bisexual rural teachers.

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[12]41 years old, female, community college, computer education, rural Colorado, 10 years experience, 7 years in the same school, open, survey done during the referendum year.

[13]36 years old, female, high school special education teacher, urban Wisconsin, 14 years experience, 4 years in the same school, not open, a rights protected state.

> As of late I have received obscene phone calls from a high school male student. It was directed more at my lover, who does not live with me. Accusations and comments were made concerning our sexuality. Being a spec. ed. teacher I do not get a lot of exposure to mainstream kids so my life is fairly private. My lover gets much exposure being a high school math teacher. I really resent my life being invaded like this. (My lover's phone # recently was made unlisted because of these calls.) Now they are using me to get at her.. I have since made my number unlisted. This infuriates me that kids can violate our private lives for their kicks.
>
> Being a gay school teacher is tough. The media and movies etc. are making gayness more public which is good. I doubt I will feel completely O.K. about it in my lifetime though.[14]

What do we know about rural lesbian, gay male, and bisexual public school teachers:

First, that there are lesbian, gay male, bisexual teachers in rural America, although this study did not indicate their numbers or percent in the overall teacher population. The study indicated that nearly fifteen percent of the sample population of 904 described themselves as teaching in rural school districts. Also, that a disproportionate number, nearly sixty percent, of these rural gay teachers were lesbians.

> I couldn't be more out than if I were lavender colored! It is a damn shame gay people are not included in history, English, and other courses. We make a "big deal" out of Black History Month - why can't we mention those who are/were gay who made good (or bad) contributions to society? Langston Hughes, James Baldwin, Frederick the Great, Keynes, etc., etc.
>
> I feel frustrated because at our school so much is made of challenging racism and violence yet "fag" is tolerated (well - not in <u>my</u> classroom). It's a double standard. I sometimes get tired of being the only "out" teacher and taking crap for others... I was harassed by an administrator

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[14]36 years old, female, high school special education teacher, urban Wisconsin, 14 years experience, 4 years in same school, not open, a rights protected state.

who is gay (closeted) herself - Lucky for me the union supported me! (God Bless the MTEA!).

I am assertive about many things and will continue to be that way - and I will tell you bluntly; it will get me fired one day but I don't care. It's worth it. I am a good role model, a good person, and I am proud of who I am. Students need to see this. You'd be surprised at how many respond well once they know they can't jerk my chain and that I refuse to be ashamed of who or what I am! They ask intelligent questions and I answer most honestly (I will not answer questions re: the "mechanics of sex and I refer them to their counselors) and I find they often meet me more than half way.

Administration is another thing, however, no support or acknowledgement at all. They make it very hard for me, but I can take it. I was a Drill Sergeant for the army. (would be nice tho' to think of a time when I wouldn't have to take it.) Administration is a royal pain in the ass (pardon language).

Would like to join a professional organization for gay teachers so very much!!!(I really don't have time to start one myself-)[15]

Second, that while the traditional beliefs for the high turnover rate of rural teacher includes pay, isolation, and related work factors, for gay teachers there were few differences between the three groups. In the area of pay, both rural and urban teachers demonstrate similar concerns and dissatisfaction, with urban teachers being even more dissatisfied than rural teachers. The significant difference was between urban and suburban teachers. In addition, rural teachers were significantly more satisfied with working conditions than either urban or suburban teachers.

1. I teach in a small rural school where I feel I must be closeted to retain my job. I might not be fired for being lesbian but that fact - if open - would make me vulnerable

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[15]44 years old, female, high school English teacher, 11 years experience, 3 years in same school, urban, Wisconsin, a protected state.

in a conservative community - would be the real grounds for firing.
2. Immodest as it sounds, I am otherwise on pretty solid ground - popular with colleagues and enjoying a good relationship with most kids - thought I have had a few conflicts with parents because of my liberal views.
3. As years have gone by, I've developed more pride as a lesbian.
4. I am very conflicted about being closeted.
5. I'm hoping to take early retirement in next 2-3 years mainly to end living closeted.
6. I think students - straight as well as gay - need to see gay and lesbian teacher.
7. My spouse thinks you need to add a section for the spouses of gay teachers. Her thoughts are: as a woman who grew up gay in a straight school system it would have made a large difference to my self-esteem as an adolescent to have lesbian teachers who were "out."
8. As a partner I think we pay a high price to stay in the closet. And I'm angry that my partner, a very good teacher, can't be herself at work. I'm glad to see this survey. I hope to see the results through the Michigan Festival newsletter. Thanks.[16]

Third, gay suburban and rural teachers were significantly more stressed and less open than urban teachers about their sexual orientation. Rural teachers also indicated a higher rate of depersonalization from their students, a higher level of emotional exhaustion, and a lowered sense of personal accomplishment from teaching than either urban or suburban teachers.

> I am a 40 year old male who has recently begun coming out. My principal and a few close staff members who know have been very supportive. I do have a huge fear that if a parent learns of my sexual preference that my job would be

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[16]52 years old, female, High School English teacher, rural Illinois, 28 years experience, 28 years in the same school, not open.

> on the line. I do "play the game" of being heterosexual with the staff I have not come out to - [17]

Fourth, the type of community in which you teach strongly affects the components of one's identity. The components for gay rural teachers were significantly different from those of urban or suburban gay teachers. Rural and suburban teachers were significantly less open, more fearful of exposure, less accepting of their identities, and different in their overall sense identity than urban teachers. Rural teachers were also significantly different than suburban teachers in these areas. This was apparent in their fear of discovery and dismissal. These results indicate that issues that are not self-evident, such as beliefs, feelings, or issues of private conduct, are deeply affected by community norms. Private issues may in some ways be greater sources of concern than self-evident differences from your community, such as being white in an African American community, Black in a white community, or being foreign, which are known causes for estrangement and friction since they affect one's self-image.

> All my friends at work know. I came out to some and some figured it out. My students don't know, but my principal does. Most of the staff knows. I think I would go nuts with out these people knowing. It's frustrating to be open sometimes and not others. I work in a conservative, rural district and I fear for my job if <u>some</u> people knew.

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[17]40 years old, male, elementary classroom teacher, rural Colorado, 18 years experience, 13 years in same school, open, survey given during referendum.

> There are times (not just at work) that I long for the freedom to really be myself without fear of reprisal of some kind.[18]

Fifth, rural teachers have experienced a higher rate of deaths related to AIDS than urban teachers or suburban teachers. It was suggested that the lack of gay support may be the cause for greater stress among rural gay male teachers. Another cause for greater stress and less openness may have been the stress associated with being unable to express the loss of friends to AIDS, since to do so would be tantamount to disclosure.

> Living and teaching in this small rural community is a challenge. I am well known in the community and some know that I have lived with my partner for over twenty years. There has never been an issue about this. I am very quiet and discrete at work. I socialize out of town. The school board might be forced to let me go if my life style becomes public without state and/or federal protection.[19]

Sixth, lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers for the most part live in fear of being exposed, or of being rumored to be gay. Their fear causes them to build walls between themselves and their students and communities.

> I feel being gay has made or helped me become a better teacher. I feel I'm in touch with my feelings better than the straight teachers I know - and that I am a better teacher. I love teaching 1st grade and feel I'm a great teacher. My first year teaching, I took home $500.00 a month - now I'm taking home $2,000 a month and that's O.K.,

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[18]35 years old, female, middle school math teacher, rural Colorado, 10 years experience, 6 years in the same school, not open.

[19]43 years old, female, elementary classroom teacher, rural Michigan, 12 years experience, 2 years in the same school, not open.

but not enough. I'm out on a state and national level, but not local.[20]

Applications and Implications

There are four broad implications to be drawn from this study of community and conformity, using a lesbian, gay male, and bisexual population. First, additional research should be conducted into a variety of variables related to conformity to community values, specifically, in relationship to rural teacher turnover and failure of teachers to seek rural positions. Second, administrators and educational consultants should be prepared to review their conduct in the face of community attitudes. Third, administrators and consultants should be aware of the stress and potential community alienation they may place on teachers when introducing new materials, programs, or curricula that may conflict with community standards, and prepare solutions beforehand. Fourth, and finally, we should consider the entire issue of non-conforming students and the effects of non-conformity on them.

> I feel that being out would cause problems/create barriers to the counseling process in a generally homophobic population. For example 1. it is probably too much to expect a homophobic client to self-disclose to an open gay/lesbian, 2. Counselors already have problems working 1 to 1 behind closed doors because of the Hatch Act. Introducing gay/lesbian variables into this ? fascist brew would likely blow the windows out, as well.[21]

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[20]45 years old, male, elementary classroom teacher, rural Oregon, 15 years experience, 14 years in the same school, not open.

[21]42 years old, male, elementary school counselor, rural Hawaii, 14.5 years experience, 1 year in the same school, not open.

Teachers, whether gay or straight, who hold or express non-conformist views may become alienated from their communities in order to protect themselves from censure and firing. Alienation and fear directly affect the relationship between the student and the teacher, the teacher and the administration, the teacher and the community, and the life of the teacher is self-evident and documented. When community views narrow, the potential dissonance between the non-conformist teacher and community increases. In the case of rural teachers, the problems of physical distance, consensus of community attitudes, and insolation increases the potential personal dissonance. Further research into conformity to community values may provide a more complete explanation of rural teacher recruitment, job turnover, and job performance. These areas are best studied by researchers interested and trained in rural education.

What would you risk? Many of you are administrators in or consultants to rural communities. You are regularly presented with the problems of understanding a community's values, while attempting to bring about change. For you the issue of conformity and community should take the form of walking in other people's shoes, deciding whether to confront local values for the benefit of students or educational change. For example, do you implement an evolution-based biology curriculum in the face of a community that believes in creationism? Do you try to establish the new national standards in the social sciences that drop some old white men and political history in favor of minorities and

cultural history? Does the literature curriculum include titles or selections by authors who are controversial to that community? Are current events, such as euthanasia, discussed or avoided? Are you willing to bring sexual issues to the rural school? Will you tell rural children, who are gay, that they are not alone? As leaders, who will establish the tone of rural schools, you must decide where you stand on these issues. Challenge yourself, ask yourself how often the politically expedient decision replaced the correct or morally right decision. How often do your personal views intervene? Ask yourself, why does school prayer exist in so many schools in Alabama, thirty years after the Supreme Court decisions without a major legal challenge from teachers or administrators. Ask yourself, if you are not willing to take on and commit to a tough issue or course, why should teachers?

Teachers are sensitive to and defensive of their administrations and the communities in which they work. We need to acknowledge those concerns. In rural communities the challenge is to balance individual differences with community values. In a world where change and exchange are increasing at an incredible rate, we know little about the mechanism of how to bring about change in these environments, while respecting and coexisting with local customs and values.

Finally, we know very little about non-conforming students in general, and almost nothing about them in rural schools. There may be some insight through the research done in the gay

coming out process for non-conforming rural students. The research on the coming out process indicates many behavioral problems, among these are: higher levels of suicide, higher drop-out rates, lowered self-esteem, and disconnection from family and traditional support systems. We need to know more about the effects and outcomes of non-conformity on students.

> The gay experience fosters a sensitivity and respect for individuality and alternative living in our society. Straight teachers in general do not exhibit this sensitivity and awareness or <u>teach</u> individual differences and tolerance of others with the same depth or enthusiasm.
>
> At my age my sexuality does not seem as important an identity issue as it one was-- so being "out" is not important to me. I rarely think about it as I once did. I suppose many more people know than I assume and it's not important.
>
> The timing of this survey needs commenting - I am much more tired and "burned out" in May than I was in November. I would have answered differently in the Fall. Good Luck.[22]

<u>Conceptual Rationale</u>

One might assume that as lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teachers become committed to their identity and open about their sexual orientation, they would have more normal relations with other teachers, students, and administrators, and that they will concurrently experience comparable levels of job stress and job satisfaction. However, the homosexual and bisexual teacher has been easy "prey" for criticism, creating a real dilemma. The more lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers seek to be open about themselves, the more they risk censure from their colleagues, administrators, and communities. Closeted teachers,

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[22]47 years old, female elementary classroom teacher, rural Massachusetts, 16 years experience, 13 years in the same school, neutral on openness, a rights protected state.

on the other hand, live with the constant threat that they will be discovered (Olsen, 1987; Smith·1985; Woods, 1990).

Lesbians, gay males, and bisexuals engage in a struggle to balance their need for a personal identity with their need for an occupational group identity as a teacher which is assumed to be heterosexual. For lesbians, gay males, and bisexuals the lack of congruency and integration with the heterosexual assumption creates dissonance (Weigert, Teitge & Teitge, 1986). Seeking an occupational (social) identity may mean limiting gay or bisexual identity. By establishing a lesbian, gay male or bisexual (self) identity one may limit one's social identity. This relationship of identity needs may be seen as a consonance-dissonance dichotomy. Complete consonance for homosexual and bisexual teachers within the heterosexual society may be difficult since public respectability is a component of social identity and is within the role-model function of the teacher (Delon, 1984; Weigert, et al., 1986).

The conflict between personal and occupational identity for homosexuals may also be seen in terms of a social/self realization matrix, with consonant and dissonant identity factors affecting occupational outcomes based on the priority of self or social identity. The greater the emphasis on self-realization the greater the potential social estrangement. The greater the emphasis on social realization, the more potential personally dissonance (Weigert, et al., 1986).

While the sources of dissonance may vary between communities the central theme of establishing an individual identity, versus a occupational group identity, would apply to all individuals. It was expected that there would be differences in job satisfaction, levels of job and sexual identity stress, and openness among rural, suburban, and urban gay and bisexual teachers.

Methods and Techniques

Lesbian and/or gay male teacher organizations were contacted and asked to participate in a survey of lesbian, gay male, and bisexual teachers focusing on openness, job stress, and job satisfaction. This survey was distributed to their members, since obtaining membership lists was not possible. Twelve organizations agreed to participate in distributing the survey. These included three national, four state, and five urban based gay teacher organizations. The largest group was the Lesbian Teachers Network, which is headquartered in Iowa.

A four-section instrument was constructed. The sections included a general openness survey (alpha .872), a job satisfaction survey (Lester's TJSQ) (Lester, 1982; 1983), a modified to included gay teacher specific stress items, Maslach Burnout Instrument (Maslach & Jackson, 1981a, 1981b)(alpha .838), and a demographic data section. The general openness and stress sections were pretested and factored using an urban lesbian and gay male population (N=193) before final modification and inclusion in the survey. The openness, job satisfaction, and job

stress sections were re-factored using the gay teacher sample (N=895).

The survey packets contained two copies of the survey instrument, a cover letter, and return envelopes. By requesting the teacher who received the survey packet to pass along the second copy to a known lesbian, gay male, or bisexual teacher who was not a member of a gay teacher group, the survey could be snowballed, thereby enlarging the survey population and providing a sampling group not associated with a gay teacher organization.

Data

Thirteen hundred and fifty survey packets were sent to various gay teacher groups for distribution in the spring of 1992. The researcher received 904 responses. Heterosexual surveys returned were not used in the data analysis. For this ancillary analysis sample size is N=868 (rural n=128, suburban n=354, urban n=386). Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Table 1 is a cross tabulation of the type of communities surveyed (urban, suburban, and rural) by the grades within a school (grade level of school). The community composition was 43.1% urban (n=390), 39.5% suburban (n=357), and 14.2% rural (n=128). The sample (n=903) was composed of 298 elementary (33.0%), 120 middle (13.5%), 20 kindergarten through 8th grade (2.2%), 38 junior high (4.3%), 256 high schools (29.4 %), 23 junior-senior highs (2.5%), 64 college (7.2%), and 19 district level (held district wide positions)(2.1%) responses. Fifty

Table 1

Cross Tabulation of Type of Community
by Type of School with
Percent of Sample

Type of community Type of school	Urban n % of sample	Suburban n % of sample	Rural n % of sample	Total n % of sample
Elementary	126 14.1	121 13.6	43 4.8	290 33.0
K-8TH	6 .7	8 .9	5 .6	19 2.1
Middle	54 6.1	47 5.3	19 2.1	120 13.5
Junior H.S.	19 2.1	16 1.8	3 .3	38 4.3
JR/SR H.S.	6 .7	7 .8	10 1.1	23 2.6
Senior H.S	109 12.2	122 13.7	24 2.7	256 28.8
College	35 3.9	16 1.8	12 1.3	63 7.1
District	8 .9	5 .6	6 .7	19 2.1
Other	27 3.0	15 1.7	6 .7	48 5.5
Total	390 43.7	357 40.0	128 14.3	875 98.3

responses were placed in the other category (5.6%). Three Department of Defense and 5 religious high school teachers responded. Five state operated special school teachers of various grade levels responded. State operated schools, Department of Defense schools, and special schools account for 1.8% (n=16) of the sample. Missing accounted for 1.2% (n=12).

Table 2 details the breakdown of teachers by Affectional Identity by Type of Community. Twice as many lesbians responded as did gay males, while bisexuals made up nearly ten percent of

Table 2

Cross Tabulation of Type of Community by Affectional Identity with Number, Percent of Row, and Percent of Column

Type	Lesbian	Gay male	Bisexual	Total
Missing	6	6		
	50.0	50.0		12
	.7	.7		1.3
Urban	182	168	35	
	47.3	43.6	9.1	385
	41.5	44.0	49.3	43.2
Suburban	166	162	24	
	47.2	46.0	6.8	352
	37.8	42.4	33.8	39.5
Rural	76	39	12	
	59.8	30.7	9.4	127
	17.3	10.2	16.9	14.2
Other	10	7		
	58.8	41.2		17
	2.2	1.9		1.9
Total	439	382	71	892
	49.2	42.8	8.0	100.0

the responding population. Of those that identified a type of community, lesbians made up a larger percentage of the population

than either urban or suburban study groups. This may also indicate that lesbians can pass more easily in rural life.

When teachers were asked questions related to job satisfaction and job stress results, indicated that type of community did not generally affect job satisfaction. However, stress related to conformity to community norms, in this case, being gay, made significant difference to job stress. Only two factors demonstrated significant differences in means in job satisfaction (see table 3). These were Pay and Working Conditions; in both cases urban teachers were least satisfied.

In regard to the issue of Pay, suburban teachers were the most satisfied, while rural teachers were less satisfied than suburban teachers, but more satisfied than urban teachers. Urban teachers were the least satisfied with Working Conditions while rural teachers were the most satisfied. The remainder of the factors showed no general patterns, since differences were generally exceptionally small with various groups holding top and bottom mean scores.

On the Level of Professional Challenge Questionnaire (stress) only Identity Dissonance produced significant differences between group means (see Table 3). Urban teachers were significantly less concerned with gay items than either suburban or rural teachers. Suburban teachers were less stressed than rural teachers over sexual orientation. Results support traditional views on the issue of gay stress and type of community in which one works. While not tested, it would seem

Table 3

Significant Teacher Job Satisfaction and Level of Professional Challenge Factors (Stress) by Type of Community: 1) Urban, 2) Suburban, 3) Rural

Factor	Gp	Mean	SD	F	Prob.
Pay[1]	1	19.81	5.96	3.42	.033
	2	20.88	5.38		
	3	20.00	5.95		
Working conditions[2]	1	15.65	4.10	13.76	.000
	2	16.93	3.32		
	3	17.11	3.47		
Identity dissonance[3]	1	22.67	13.38	17.37	.000
	2	28.09	13.66		
	3	29.20	13.52		

Pairs of groups significantly different @ .05

[1] Urban & Suburban
[2] Urban & Suburban; Urban & Rural
[3] Urban & Suburban; Urban & Rural

reasonable to assume that gays and bisexuals living in rural areas would be more stressed. Rural gay teachers also showed the most Emotional Exhaustion, on the same questionnaire, while urban teachers had the least. Rural teachers felt the least sense of Personal Accomplishment from their work, while urban teachers had the most. The same was true for Depersonalization; rural teachers were more depersonalizing, while urban teachers were less so. These results, while not statistically significant, may present modest support for the effects of being closeted or less

open, in that those teachers who are less open must build a wall of protection between themselves and others. This appears to result in higher emotional exhaustion, lowered sense of accomplishment, and greater student depersonalization.

The type of community in which one works was a strong influence on the identity (IDQ) factors (see Table 4). Only Separatism and Identity Integration demonstrated no significant differences. The differences between groups clearly indicate that urban gay teachers have a distinct view of themselves, which is related to the type of community in which they teach, and that urban gay teachers enjoy greater individual freedom of identity. The historical tradition of moving to cities for independence, anonymity, and community appears to be a factor even today. Results of this analysis support the argument that factor loading differences on the IDQ may have been a result of differences between the urban test population and the current teacher sample. While not significant, the suburban teachers scored higher than rural teachers on all factors and the IDQ total score with one exception, Commitment. The effect of bisexuals in this analysis was most likely seen on the factor Commitment. Bisexuals were more likely to be suburban; their presence in the suburban sample may have caused the marginal significance difference between urban and suburban teachers. The type of community in which a gay teacher teaches is important to issues of identity and identity dissonance.

Table 4
Identity-Disclosure Factors and Total by Community: 1) Urban, 2) Suburban, 3) Rural

Factor	Gp	Mean	SD	F	Prob.
Going public[1]	1	28.50	8.43	14.32	.000
	2	26.02	7.53		
	3	24.84	7.54		
Identity integration	1	21.86	4.69	1.88	.153
	2	21.43	4.56		
	3	21.05	4.23		
Exposure[2]	1	16.58	3.31	5.70	.004
	2	15.99	3.22		
	3	15.57	3.42		
Separatism	1	12.24	3.19	.35	.701
	2	12.39	3.14		
	3	12.15	3.16		
Commitment[3]	1	13.46	2.02	3.27	.039
	2	13.09	2.20		
	3	13.30	2.17		
Identity acceptance[4]	1	17.73	2.42	4.85	.008
	2	17.29	2.45		
	3	17.05	2.67		
IDQTOT[5]	1	120.08	17.68	9.45	.000
	2	115.96	16.15		
	3	113.69	15.44		

Pairs of groups significantly different @ .05

[1] Rural & Urban; Suburban & Urban
[2] Rural & Urban; Suburban & Urban
[3] Suburban & Urban
[4] Rural & Urban; Suburban & Urban
[5] Rural & Urban; Suburban & Urban

Note: IDQTOT, Identity Disclosure Questionnaire total

Table 5

Cross Tabulation of AIDS Deaths by Type of of Community, With Row and Column Percentages

Number of deaths	Urban	Suburban	Rural	Total n Percent
No Deaths	226	235	90	551
	40.1	41.7	16.0	63.0
	57.9	66.0	70.3	
One	72	49	14	135
	51.1	34.8	9.9	15.4
	18.5	13.8	10.9	
Two	34	33	17	84
	38.2	37.1	19.1	9.6
	8.7	9.3	13.3	
Three(+)	58	39	7	104
	53.2	35.8	6.4	11.9
	14.9	11.0	5.5	
Total n	390	356	128	874
Percent	44.6	40.7	14.6	100.0

A cross tabulation of AIDS death by type of community (see Table 5) shows nearly a third of rural teachers reported one or more deaths, and a disproportionate number of these rural teachers reported two deaths (19.1%; sample 14.6%). It should be recalled that the rural sample was disporportionately lesbian, while AIDS related deaths are overwhelming a gay male event. Here the number of cases reflect a significant difference for these rural male teachers.

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